

THE
A P O S T L E S,
THE
L I G H T O F T H E W O R L D;
AND THE
O B L I G A T I O N S
WHICH
M I N I S T E R S O F T H E G O S P E L
ARE UNDER TO FOLLOW THEIR
D O C T R I N E A N D E X A M P L E.

A
S E R M O N,
Preached before the
S Y N O D O F G L A S G O W A N D A I R,
A T A I R, A P R I L 8 T H, 1766.
BY
J O H N C O L Q U H O U N, A.M.
MINISTER OF BALDERNOCK.

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MATTH. v. 14. and 16.

*Ye are the light of the world.—Let your light so
shine before men, that they may see your good
works, and glorify your Father which is in hea-
ven.*

THESE words are a part of that celebrated sermon preached by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, upon a mountain in Galilee; wherein are contained the noblest maxims of pure and undefiled religion, the most sacred and important laws of holiness and integrity, of uprightness and sincerity, in a great measure unknown to the world before:----herein, in short, is laid down every rule for perfecting the judgment and ennobling the mind, for regulating the affections and influencing the conduct; and the whole is delivered in the most plain and obvious manner.

THIS great and divine Teacher of mankind gave authority to his doctrine by the eternal reason upon which it was founded, as well as by the mighty works he did in confirmation of it. The worship of God had been greatly corrupted by the Jewish teachers, and the rule of life and happiness miserably perplexed by the traditions and doctrines of men: false glosses had been put upon the law of God; unjust restraints

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and limits upon the eternal rule of righteousness, and the force of it in many instances explained away. In short, the moral law, which is a transcript of the divine perfections and character, was explained in such a way and manner as gave liberty to the greatest wickedness to be committed.

WHEN this now was the state of the Jewish nation, and when the Gentile world was in no better, but in a much worse situation as to religion and morals, our divine Saviour seasonably appears under the amiable character of *the light of the world*; rescues the law of God from the false glosses and absurd interpretations which had been put upon it by the Rabbies of Israel, gives solemn instances and degrees of holiness and virtue, which, though not altogether unknown to the Ancients, yet were never put among the precepts of philosophy that were reckoned binding; and he enforces these precepts with motives in a great measure peculiar to himself.

Our Saviour, having in the preceding context described the character and blessedness of such as should embrace his religion, comes, from the 13th verle and downwards, to address himself more immediately to his disciples, whom he had lately called to follow him, and who were soon after this to be invested with the character of Apostles, to publish his religion to the world. *Ye are the salt of the earth, &c.* as if he had said, ye are appointed by the pure and holy doctrine which ye are to preach, and by the favour of

of your holy conversation, to reclaim and reform a sinful and guilty world, to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me; but if you, and your successors in office, shall, by the wickedness and impiety of your lives, or by your slothfulness, lose the favour of your good conversation, what can you expect, but to be rejected of me at last, as rotten and putrified members of my body.

NEXT follow the words of our text, *Ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

WE find our Saviour, by way of eminence, calling himself the light of the world: *I am the light of the world;* and as such we find him described by the ancient prophets.

Now, *light*, by an easy and elegant metaphor, signifies *truth* or *knowledge*; because, what light is to the eye, to guide and direct the body in the common affairs and concerns of life, that truth or instruction is to the soul in a moral or religious sense, to inform the judgment, and direct the conduct. As the sun is the source and cause of light and life to the natural world, the same Jesus Christ is by the gladdening and rejoicing truths and doctrines he taught to the souls of men: and as the apostles of our Lord, and the pastors and teachers of the Christian church are honoured

honoured to be workers together with him, in publishing his doctrine to mankind, in enlightening the minds of men in the knowledge of spiritual and divine things, and pointing out to them the road to eternal felicity; so, with the utmost propriety, may they be styled *the light of the world*, borrowing and deriving their light and all their other accomplishments from him and his blessed Spirit, to fit and furnish them for their arduous work.

LET your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven, i. e. be ye careful, in the high and eminent station, in which ye are soon to be placed, to let the light of your doctrine and example shine so conspicuously before men, that they being convinced of the excellency of your doctrine, by the blessed influence of it upon your own lives, may thereby be invited and engaged to the belief and practice of it, and thus glorify your Father which is in heaven.

IN this view, then, I propose by divine assistance, to consider the words of the text: and, in discoursing from them, shall, *First*, Attempt to shew, that the apostles shone as the light of the world both by their *doctrine* and *example*. Hence natively will follow, in the *Second* place, and by way of *Application*, the obligations which we, who are the established teachers and instructors of mankind, are under, to imitate them in both of these respects:---Agreeably to this says
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the Apostle Paul, *Be ye followers of me even as I am of Christ*, 1 Cor. ii. 1.

As this subject is exceeding copious, I can only take notice of a few general things upon it to prevent being tedious. And what I propose to offer upon it is only by way of remembrancer to you my reverend Fathers and Brethren. I know you and myself too well, to pretend to any thing more.

I. THEN, I am to shew that the apostles shone as the light of the world by their *doctrine* and *example*. And, 1st, by their *doctrine*.

Now, what were the doctrines they taught in consequence of the commission they received from their Lord and Master? Why, in the first place, They exhibited to the world a perfect and complete system of pure and undefiled religion in its primitive simplicity and perfection, altogether free from every low, unworthy, and debasing mixture.

IN the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we have presented to our view, for instance, the most glorious representation of the supreme Being, what he is in himself, and in what relation he stands to us. In himself, he is represented as infinitely great and transcendently excellent, as the one only, the living and the true God, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, and absolutely independent, possessed of all those excellencies of nature which can justly claim the supreme esteem, love, and veneration of all his rational

tional and intelligent creatures, viz. of almighty power and infinite understanding, of impartial and inflexible justice, of unspotted purity and holiness, of immutable truth and veracity, and of boundless and unlimited goodness.

TH E R E he is represented, besides, not only as the great and Almighty Lord and Creator of heaven and of earth, but as continually upholding all his creatures in being, by the word of his almighty power, and by the constant influence and care of an all-wise and over-ruling providence. The creation, and every part of it, is represented as full of him; and nothing which he hath made is either so great, so little, or so distant, which he does not essentially inhabit.----

IN short, his providence is there said to be universal, extending not only to the great and important events in the universe, but even to the very minutest circumstance attending the least and lowest of his creatures, so that *the very hairs of our head are all numbered by him, and not a sparrow can fall to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father.*

Lastly, **U**NDER what a variety of beautiful and tender images is he there described as standing related to us? Not barely as our Creator and Preserver, but as our most merciful Father in Jesus Christ, and in him the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort and consolation, *as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to wrath, not dealing with us after our sins, nor rewarding us according to our iniquities,*

quities, but pitying our weakness and infirmities, as a father pitieith his children, as delighting in mercy, whilst judgment is represented to be his strange work.

IN the second and last place upon this head, the apostles, *as the light of the world*, have not only presented us with a glorious description of God, his perfections and government, but have further given us an entire and complete body of the best laws and precepts, for regulating every part of our inward as well as outward man, and that both with respect to God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

As the right government of the heart is a duty of the highest moment and importance in religion, and of the utmost consequence to our present and future happiness, so our divine Saviour, who himself was well acquainted with human nature, and knew what was in man, framed all his laws for regulating the affections and dispositions of the mind, from whose ungoverned motions all the evils and disorders in human life do proceed.

HE has not only guarded, by the purity and spiritual nature of his precepts, against the deformities of practice and our ill behaviour in life, but has gone higher, and recommended the government of the passions as our great business in life; has laid down such rules for the attaining of purity and holiness, as are agreeable to the best reason, and at the same time adapted to the understanding of all mankind.

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ALL the laws and precepts of Christianity, I say, are founded upon the best reason, and approve themselves at first view to every ingenuous mind, and are summed up by our Lord and his apostles in a few easy propositions. *To love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul, and strength and mind; to worship him who is a Spirit in spirit and in truth; to love our neighbour as ourselves; to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; to put on (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, bumbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, &c.* *To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; to deny ourselves, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God: in a word, to be holy as God is holy, pure as he is pure, and perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Lastly, UPON this head; what shews the superior excellency of the laws and precepts of our holy religion above all others, is, that they reach to the heart as well as to the external behaviour; they not only require external innocence and decency of character, but an entire probity, an inward sanctity, and a regard to what is good and excellent, and naturally amiable; they regard the cleanness of the heart, and the renovation of the mind, in the likeness of the divine nature: *The law is spiritual, and the commandment is holy, and just, and good;* Rom. vii. 12.

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BUT, to proceed, and in the *second* place, the apostles, *as the light of the world*, have opened up to us a new and surprising scene of the divine administration of the world, carrying on by the eternal and only begotten Son of God, and the blessed Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented in scripture to be in a state of ruin.

THE sacred writers inform us, that this state was not the original appointment of God, but took its rise from the wilful transgression of our first parents, who were created originally in a holy and happy state, having the divine image stamped in legible characters upon their souls, in which consisted their highest dignity, honour, and glory. *Being in honour*, and in happiness, we are taught, *they did not abide*, but fell from their original glory and perfection, and sunk down into a state of degeneracy and corruption, by which they not only forfeited all claim and title to the divine favour and acceptance, but exposed themselves, and their posterity, to all the mournful consequences of their apostasy from God.

THUS all flesh, having corrupted their way before God, were reduced to the most wretched and forlorn circumstances.

THE colours are by no means too strong, which the apostle employs in drawing the character of the Gentile world, at the time our divine Saviour made his appearance in human life; contemporary writers justify him, when he de-

scribes mankind to have been, at that time, alienated from the life of God, walking in vanity, through the blindness of their minds; and that, being past feeling, they were given up to a reprobate mind, to work all manner of wickedness and uncleanness with greediness.

As for the Jews, notwithstanding they had been favoured with a peculiar revelation of the Divine will, stamped with all the characters of truth and divinity, a very necessary circumstance, to be sure, to give it the just force of a law, and which was wholly wanting in the Gentile religion; instead of regulating their lives by those eternal and immutable laws of righteousness and holiness, clearly made known to them by Moses and the prophets, they satisfied themselves with ceremonial observances; and, fond of such rites which please the imagination, they little minded the purification of their hearts, but substituted a world of vain and insignificant traditions in the room of the substantial and weighty matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God.

WHEN Jews and Gentiles were in this sad and deplorable state, having no hope, and without God in the world, the inspired writers of the New Testament further inform us, that almighty God, from all eternity, foreseeing the fatal apostasy of the human race, did not determine, in a way of strict rigour, and unrelenting severity, to doom over a sinful and guilty world to endless and inevitable misery, but from the immense benignity

ty of his nature, entertained the kind and gracious design of saving a sinful and guilty world, and re-instituting it into his favour and friendship; but, at the same time, the wisdom of his government, and the purity of his nature, made it absolutely necessary, before he could do this, that he should publish and declare the odious nature of our crimes, how hateful and offensive to himself, how contrary to the laws of his wise administration, and how dangerous to the world in general.

Now, the declaration which the all-wise and righteous Governor of the world hath given us, is, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world, not only to give us a re-publication of the religion or law of nature, which mankind had corrupted, and the very knowledge of which was, in a great measure, lost; but to give himself, his life, a ransom for the sins of the world.

THE particular manner in which Christ interposed in the redemption of the world, the satisfaction or atonement he made for the sins of it, or his office as Mediator, in the largest sense, between God and man, is thus represented to us in sacred writ: that he was, by way of eminence, not only the Prophet, that *Prophet that should come into the world*, to declare the Divine will to mankind; but also *our great High Priest, to offer himself a propitiatory sacrifice, and make atonement for the sins of the world.*

THE apostles, who are characterized in the

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text, as the light of the world, not only declare, that our Saviour died as a martyr, for the truth of his doctrine, and that he might set before his followers a perfect pattern of patience, under suffering, and resignation to the will of God; but the apostles, I say, every where preached this doctrine of Christ's being the atonement for the sins of the world; and have, in multitudes of places, in their writings, declared, confirmed, and explained it at large: they expressly declare, *That Christ redeemed us with his blood; redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: that we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: that he is set forth, or fore-ordained, to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, &c.* Rom. iii. 25. *That he was once offered to bear the sins of many: that his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*

AND, which seems of peculiar weight, the Messiah is described, before-hand, in the Old Testament, under the same character, *and as a sacrifice to expiate sin**.

FURTHER, the whole train of legal sacrifices, ceremonies, and oblations, plainly allude to the great and final atonement to be made by the blood of Christ.

IT might also be shewn, that our Lord himself, during his ministry on earth, not only taught this doctrine; but the mournful complaints which he uttered, the terrors of soul, and inward

* See Isa. liii. and elsewhere.

ward agonies which he sustained in the garden, and on the cross, proclaimed the doctrine of atonement with incontestable evidence.

THIS doctrine, and, in short, the other peculiar doctrines of Christianity, which are founded upon it, and strictly and inseparably connected with it; such as the pardon of sin, and the intercession of Christ in heaven, and other joyful doctrines of the gospel, subdued kingdoms to the belief of them, turned sinners into saints, in multitudes, and reared up a church to Christ in this world, in spite of all enemies and opposition, and against which all the gates of hell have never been able to prevail.

MAY we, who are the ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, believe it; may we feel its divine power and energy upon our own souls; and may we preach it to you who attend upon the ordinances of the gospel, as that alone, which, through a believing application to this blood of atonement, can administer real comfort and consolation to your souls, under the sense of the many sins you are justly chargeable with, in the sight of an infinitely holy and righteous God.

WHAT a rich, what a divine profusion of mercy and compassion, of grace and glory, appears through the whole of this dispensation! a dispensation, indeed, full of grace and mercy, wisely ordered and appointed by the great God himself, and by which he hath made sufficient provision for the reparation of his honour, the vindication of his holiness, the satisfaction of his justice,

justice, the manifestation of his truth and faithfulness, and for the present consolation and eternal happiness of all repenting believing sinners to the end of the world.

IN the last place, upon this head; the apostles, *as the light of the world*, have further informed us, that our blessed Saviour, in consequence of his having offered himself a sacrifice for our sins upon the cross, ascended to heaven, where he appears as our Advocate and Intercessor with the Father, and effectually prevails with him, in virtue of this sacrifice, to bestow upon his people all the great and invaluable blessings of his purchase, promised in that everlasting well-ordered and sure covenant, of which he is ordained the **MEDIATOR** and **SURETY**. That he is invested, besides, with royal dignity and power over all the inhabitants of the visible and invisible worlds, particularly his church, over which he exercises an invisible government himself, and by the agency of the eternal Spirit. Further, that he is constituted and appointed, by the Father, universal Judge of quick and dead; and that he will descend from heaven, in a glorious and illustrious way and manner, at the end of the world, to decide the fate of all mankind, *by rendering to every one according to his works*. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 22, 23. And, in the last place, we are expressly informed by St. Paul, that, when our divine Saviour hath

hath fully accomplished all the parts of his vast mediatorial undertaking, *he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all**.

THE time allotted for this discourse, will not permit me to enter upon a more particular discussion of these great and interesting subjects; by publishing and transmitting of which, however, to posterity, the apostles made good their character of being *the light of the world*.

IN the third place; the many full and express promises of the blessed Spirit of all grace, not only to dispel that darkness and ignorance, which hover over the understandings of men, but to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of spiritual and divine things, and to purify our hearts and affections, are another very valuable and important part of Christianity; and by assuring us of which, for the above purposes, *and to lead and guide us unto all truth and holiness*, the apostles justly merited the character of being *the light of the world*.

LET any one but seriously reflect on the universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature in general, and his own propensity and bias to that which is evil; let him, at the same time, reflect on the strength and impetuosity of his irregular appetites and desires, the temptations of Satan as well as the surrounding temptations of a vicious and corrupt world; when, I say, he reflects upon,

* See 1 Cor. xv. 24. and downwards.

upon, and considers all this, may not his hands hang down, and his face gather paleness?

BUT what wonders may he not perform by the assistance of an almighty God, and an all-sufficient promise? *If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

WHAT a noble, what a powerful, and divine motive is this, to animate our zeal, and to engage us to the boldest efforts of goodness? A generous and divine cordial, indeed, to keep the soul from fainting under the sense of its weakness, and to inspire it with courage and intrepidity in every hour of danger and difficulty. How rejoicing the promise, *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength perfected in weakness.*

LET us lift up our souls, then, to almighty God, *to the great Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, that he would strengthen us with might, by his Spirit, in the inner man; that he would lead and guide us in the way in which we ought to go, and never suffer us to be tempted beyond what we are able.*

IN the fourth place, the apostles, *as the light of the world*, have established and confirmed the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, by assuring us that this life is not the whole of our being, but that, on our leaving this world, we are to enter on a new scene of existence.

A FUTURE life is a doctrine, for the certainty of it, almost peculiar to revelation; a doctrine extremely desirable in its own nature, and of the greatest consequence to the peace and happiness of mankind.

IT was, indeed, canvassed very narrowly by the ancient philosophers; and, after all, it had that force but with few of them, as to influence them to a steady and uniform course of virtue. Some of them, however, thought it highly probable; and the reason they gave for it, was, that the best of men were often involved in hardships and calamities in life; and therefore it was but reasonable to suppose, that God, in a future state, would shew his love to virtue, and hatred of vice, by making a suitable difference and distinction betwixt the conditions of good and bad men.

Now, whether they owed the light they had, in this important and interesting doctrine, to the investigations of their own unassisted reason, merely, or to some ancient tradition, derived originally from the ancient Patriarchs, or the Jews, to whom God, in some measure, had revealed it, is uncertain: but, by whatever way they came to the knowledge of it, whether by the light of nature, or revelation, it is certain, the belief of it was rendered very doubtful by the disputes of the best and wisest philosophers that ever lived; and those of them who believed it, had yet very blind and imperfect notions concerning its nature and duration.

THIS defect, however, of the light of nature, our Saviour, and his apostles, have abundantly supplied in the gospel revelation: men have now sufficient encouragement to support them in their choice of virtue, and in their constant adherence to it in all cases, and under all circumstances whatsoever, seeing, whatever they may suffer in the cause of virtue and true religion here, yet, in a future state, it will appear illustrious, and its cause triumphant.

BESIDES; the gospel revelation is peculiarly useful and valuable, in as much as it doth not, like the writings of the ancient philosophers, teach men by a long train of close reasoning to argue about a future state, which method might be of use to convince some of superior understanding, but would seldom be apprehended, and as seldom attended to, by the generality of mankind, who have neither leisure nor abilities for philosophical speculations: but our divine Saviour, and his apostles, have laid down this doctrine in a plain and positive manner, as a truth to be received by immediate revelation from, and upon the authority of, God himself. The language of Christ is, *He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* And the apostles, in all their writings, deliver this doctrine in the very same positive manner, without any studied ornament of speech,

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or long chain of reasoning: *The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord: to them, who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, he will render eternal life.*

IT would have been unbecoming our Saviour's dignity, as a prophet from God, and much more as the Messiah, to have entered into a long detail of reasoning and argumentation about this and the other doctrines of his religion: such a method would have greatly derogated from the intrinsic evidence of Christianity, the great design of which is to publish doctrines, to assert truths, and, authoritatively, to give laws, for regulating the belief and practice of mankind.

AFTER all, it must be acknowledged, that the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead, and his consequent ascension into heaven, in presence of many witnesses, is an argument for a life after this, an argument which will influence the bulk of mankind, more than all the reasonings in the world, and the most subtle disquisitions.

AGAIN; the apostles, as *the light of the world*, with the other inspired writers, have fully assured us, that our bodies shall be raised from the dead at our Lord's coming to judgment, though mightily refined from all those principles of corruptible matter they now carry about with them: *It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;* it is

is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Marvel not at this, says our divine Saviour, for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

To conclude this head; the apostles, *as the light of the world*, in order to excite our ambition, and awaken our most diligent care, to secure an interest in the happiness of the coming world, have given us such encouraging and glorious accounts of it, as infinitely exceed all thought and comprehension; but this I cannot now enter upon.

ONCE more, in the *fifth and last place* upon this head; the apostles, *as the light of the world*, have assured us, that our present state is a state of trial and probation; that all the evils and hardships we meet with in life, shall be overruled, to serve wise and important ends in the divine government, and be made to work together for good to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28.

IT must, indeed, be owned, that the cause of virtue, and true religion, has not had, many times, according to common estimation, that visible countenance and protection of heaven, sufficient to support its votaries in the steady practice of it; the ways of heaven, no doubt, have been dark and intricate in this respect; but yet we dare not say they are unequal: for all these seeming evils which God brings upon the best of men,

men, are for their good, though themselves see it not: even in a darker period of the world, Eliphaz, in Job, could say, *Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.*

THE speculations of the philosophers of old, and wise men of antiquity, in this matter, signified, plainly, their being puzzled, to the greatest degree, concerning the seemingly unequal lots of virtue and vice, in this world; they could have been satisfied to have had it otherwise, and still hoped to find a just and wise administration: in consequence of this, they thought it not improbable, that God would send some divine Teacher to the world, to unravel the secrets of providence, and appear for the security of virtue.—Some of them continued, however, to recommend religion to their disciples; particularly resignation to the will of God, under the evils and calamities of life.—

ACCORDING to the light they had, they indeed reasoned very well; but their reasonings could never influence mankind to any tolerable degree of this, or of any other virtue, because they wanted authority to inforce their precepts, and further assurances than they could possibly attain in their present situation.

FOR this, among other weighty reasons, our blessed Saviour appeared in the world, that he might publicly assert the justice and equity of the divine management in this particular; that he might make known the cause of all those evils

evils which disturbed and disquieted the race of human kind; that all men were guilty before God, and therefore labouring under the bad effects of it; that though our views of providence, and of God, were confused and imperfect, yet he reigned over the world in mercy and d-ness, and justice and judgment were the habitation of his throne.

BUT, besides; the apostles assure us, that hardships and sufferings are inseparably connected with the notion of such a state of discipline as mankind are in at present; that, to be exempted from them altogether, would not at all be for our real interest and advantage, because this being a state of discipline and probation, whereby we are training up to a better and more perfect state, our virtues and graces must be actuated and improved, for which sufferings give us a fair opportunity: they are the prescriptions of a wise Physician, harsh, indeed, to the taste, but necessary to cool the heat, and correct the intemperance of life.

I N short, they naturally tend to curb that vanity and wantonness of temper, which, in an unmixed and prosperous state, are apt to fwell into extravagancies of spirit, and burst into dissoluteness of manners.

MANY passages of scripture might be named in confirmation of what has been above advanced. Read the few following; *My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord: neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he*

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correcteth, even as a father the son, in whom he delighteth*. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory †. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby **. It is for our profit our heavenly Father chastens us, that we may be partakers of his holiness ††.

THESE are a few of the many great and important doctrines, laws, and precepts, which the apostles, *as the light of the world*, instructed mankind in the knowledge of.

THERE are many other important doctrines and institutions which they preached in their life-time, and transmitted to posterity in their writings, and which are wisely adapted to the necessities of mankind, and conducive to the purposes of true piety and holiness, but which I cannot now enter upon.

WE proceed, therefore, II. To show, that the apostles shone, *as the light of the world*, not only by their doctrine, but by their holy and unblameable example.

WHOEVER reads the Acts of the Apostles, and their Epistles to the churches, with an ordinary degree of attention, will, at once, see the inseparable

* Prov. iii. 11, 12. † 2 Cor. iv. 17. ** Heb. xii. 11. &c.
†† Heb. xii. 10.

rable connection there was betwixt their *doctrine* and *example*, and that the one was a transcript of the other.

THEY lived, in the main, as they taught; and they practised what they preached to others. They were an example of the believers, *in word*, *in conversation*, *in charity*, *in spirit*, *in faith*, *in purity*, 1 Tim. iv. 12.

THEY were burning and shining lights in the world; in a world sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death.

By their regular and exemplary conversation, they pleaded, powerfully, the cause of their great Lord and Master, which attracted the attention and admiration of mankind, and gained more converts to the Christian faith than all the miracles they wrought besides; in so much, that the ancient apologists for the Christian religion could appeal to their very enemies for the truth of this. Their piety shone so brightly, and with such a superior and commanding lustre, that it appears to have been, as it were, the animating principle through the whole of their character.

As it was the grand aim of their lives to convert souls to God, to rescue them from the enslaving power and empire of sin and Satan, and to bring them into the glorious liberty of the children of God; so they performed those kind offices with the greatest readiness, chearfulness, and delight. And, in order to this, they ventured upon the boldest efforts of duty; and, with a becoming

becoming bravery and intrepidity of soul, steadily and unweariedly, pursued it resolutely, despising the threatenings of the mighty and the great ; and undauntedly travelling on-wards in the sacred paths of piety and virtue, without betraying the least symptom of fear and dread at what might befall them ; although they well knew, that such a course would not only endanger their present ease and safety, but expose them to the most dreadful sufferings, and to death at last. *None of these things move me*, says the great apostle of the Gentiles ; *neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*, Acts xx. 24.

IN a word, in all things they shewed themselves a pattern of good works. All the virtues and graces of the Christian life shone brightly through the whole of their ministry. They lived by faith, they walked by faith ; and, during their abode on earth, they had their conversation in heaven.

DID the apostles, *as the light of the world*, thus teach and preach, did they thus live, and act the part assigned them by their great Lord, so as, on good grounds, they were able to say, *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that, in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world?* Surely, then, it becomes us, who bear the character

of ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to whom he has committed the word of reconciliation, to imitate these primitive founders of the Christian church ; and, that, both with respect to their faith and practice.

THIS was the II. and last thing we proposed a little to consider, and by way of *Application*.

YE are the light of the world. Let your light, then, my reverend Fathers and Brethren, so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

AND, first, let the light of your doctrine shine conspicuously before the world.

Now, in order to the faithful and conscientious discharge of the important trust committed to us by the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, it becomes us, frequently, and fervently, to lift up our souls to the great Father of lights, that he would display before our minds, all the glory and majesty of spiritual and divine things ; that he would make a divine light and truth to descend into our hearts ; that we may understand, and clearly discern, the worth and importance of all those great and interesting truths revealed to us in the holy scriptures ; that we may feel their power, and divine energy, upon our hearts ; and then we shall be able, more effectually, and with better success, to convey the saving knowledge of them to the minds of all those who wait upon our ministrations.

LET us not shun to declare unto our hearers

ers the whole counsel of God, as we would be pure from their blood. Let us be at all due pains to instruct them in the great principles of religion, natural and revealed; and what these great and important duties are, which they owe to God, to Jesus Christ, to mankind, and to themselves: at the same time, let us not neglect to lay before them, the indispensable obligations they are under to perform these duties, as ever they would hope to obtain the divine favour and acceptance; let us instruct them in every important truth which it is necessary for them to know; these we must explain, enforce, and urge, by every motive and consideration, and with all that plainness and sincerity, with all that life and efficacy, freedom, and boldness, that subjects of such infinite moment and importance call for and demand.

AGAIN; as the propitiation and atonement of the Son of God, for the sins of the world, was the constant theme on which the apostles of our Lord delighted to dwell, in all their sermons and discourses; so it ought to be the main subject of ours; as it is one of the chief glories of our religion, and fraught with the truest consolation and joy, to every soul that is deeply penetrated with a sense of its guilt, and willing, through grace, to comply with the terms of the gospel. Let us, who are the ministers of Jesus Christ, glory in the cross of Christ ourselves, and let us point our hearers to the blood of this Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,
where

where only they can find healing and relief to their guilty souls.---In short, in the sufferings and atonement of the Saviour of the world, we may behold, with awe and dread, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, its contrariety to the divine nature, perfections, and character, and the complicated evils that do attend it in a present and future world.

HERE, at the same time, we may behold, in the most striking light, the importance of holiness, and its indispensable necessity in the kingdom and government of almighty God. Justly, therefore, may the appeal be made to the whole world of reasonable beings, whether any motive to holiness can be named, any inducement to true religion, which carries along with it, such a mighty efficacy, as the sacrifice of the Son of God doth?

FURTHER; if we would be the blessed instruments of reclaiming and reforming a sinful and guilty world, and adding to the church of Christ such as shall be saved at last, let us not dare to flatter sinners with vain hopes of impunity; but proclaim, aloud, in their ears, that all the threatenings and curses of the law of God, and of the gospel too, stand charged and pointed at their guilty heads, while they continue to live at open enmity with their Creator, and at variance with their own reason, conscience, and judgment. Let us endeavour to awaken them from their insensibility, by representing to them, the absolute necessity of repentance towards God, and

and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ, and of their yielding a constant and universal obedience to all the laws and commandments of God for the future; and, to attempt to display before them, the grandeur and majesty of the divine perfections, or the inherent comeliness and beauty of true religion and virtue, before they be enlightened, and renewed in the spirit of their mind, would, perhaps, be to little purpose.

" The great objects of religion, which the apostle calls *the things of God*, cannot be perceived in their proper light; their dignity, importance, and extent, cannot be perceived, but by him who is upright, and pure in heart, " *The natural man receives them not, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned**," &c.

IN short, would we shew ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; let us be at great pains to lay before our hearers their duty in its full extent, the great advantages of performing it, with the many weighty motives and arguments to obedience, which our holy religion presents us with.

LET us instruct the ignorant, support the weak, awaken the secure, reprove the obstinate, comfort the doubting and feeble-minded, and build up the saints more and more in their most holy faith.

To

* See Dr. CRAIG's sermon, on these words, ~~Ye are~~ *Ye are the salt of the earth.*

To conclude this head; in all things, let us shew ourselves a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned. And let us keep constantly upon the imagination of our hearts, that very awful and solemn charge of the great apostle of the Gentiles to Timothy: *I charge thee, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.*

IN this manner, let us attempt, under God, to discharge all the parts of our ministerial function; and if, alas! we are not so successful as we earnestly strive to be, yet, by the grace of God, we shall save our own souls.

WE proceed, *Secondly*, To shew, that the ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ must be careful, also, to let the light of their example shine brightly before men, *that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.*

WE are as a city that is set on an hill, which cannot be hid. We have need, then, to act our part well, and wisely, that our most holy religion may not suffer on our account; and that we give no occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. We must take heed not only to our *doctrine*, but to *ourselves*.

A BISHOP, says the apostle, *must be blameless. After all, to be styled a harmless or inoff-*
fen-

fensive person, as that means the being free from the outward and gross acts of vice and immorality, is but a low and indifferent character; much more, surely, is expected from the man of God, *namely*, that his life be filled up with publicly useful and beneficent purposes and actions; that his soul be adorned with every amiable and lovely quality, with undissembled piety, and love to God and Jesus Christ, and with fervent charity to all mankind, especially, to all the flock over which he is appointed an overseer. Would we, in short, *shine as lights in the world*, then, *whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report*, must inspire every thought, every design, every word and action of our lives. These must be the prevailing dispositions of our minds, and the steady principles of our moral conduct.

FURTHER, we find the same apostle advising Timothy to keep himself *pure*, thereby, plainly intimating, that the servant of the Lord must watch carefully over his heart, especially over all his inferior appetites and passions, and keep at the greatest distance from all those sinful tendencies of the flesh and spirit, which are not only the reproach of his nature, but the sure and certain means of bringing Christianity into disrepute.

THESE impurities of the flesh and spirit cloud the understanding, and throw a thick mist and darkness over all the powers of the soul, which will disqualify it for all intellectual and divine improvements. Hence, we find, St. Paul, both
by

by his advice and practice, recommending to mankind, a moderate use of the enjoyments of life, as the best preservative against the tumultuous noise of inferior appetites. *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, that, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away.*

AGAIN ; would we act our part with honour and decency, as the established teachers and instructors of mankind ; let us be on our guard against the first risings and motions of pride, ambition, and covetousness. Every one knows the more these passions are indulged, the less manageable they will prove. My reverend Fathers and Brethren, know very well, at the same time, that the peace and harmony, which subsisted for a considerable time in the primitive church, were unhappily interrupted, and, in the issue, destroyed through the influence of such destructive and unruly passions : hence schism, heresy, and numberless factions arose ; hence nation armed against nation, altar against altar, and one religious sect against its opposite, devoutly persecuting each other : It is almost needless to observe, that such a factious, turbulent, and schismatical spirit, breathes nothing of the true spirit and genius of the Christian religion, nothing of the wisdom which came down from above, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish.-----

LET it be remembered, in the *last* place, that if our character, as the ministers and servants of Jesus Christ, does not correspond to the doctrine

trine we teach, we will act but a very inconsistent part; we will belie our profession in the face of the world, injure our conscience, bring a reproach and dishonour upon that venerable Name by which we are called, give a scandal to the profane, and those that are without, by making them believe, that religion is only a cunningly devised fable, whilst we, who, of all others, should be the most regular and exemplary, are yet the most dissolute and vicious in our lives.

I SHOULD, next, proceed to consider, more particularly, the awful obligations, we, who are ministers of the gospel, are under, faithfully, to perform all the duties of our sacred function. We will hereby be fellow-workers with God himself, in establishing his kingdom of truth and righteousness in the hearts and lives of men.--- We will be animated by the noblest of all examples, even that of the Son of God himself, who continually went about doing good to the souls and bodies of men.--- We will be influenced by the hope of that glory, which is particularly promised to those servants of Christ, who turn many to righteousness.--- *Lastly*, We will have a conscientious regard to the worth and value of these precious and immortal souls committed to our care, as well as to the consideration of the invaluable ransom paid for them.--- These are all mighty motives, and incentives, to excite us to all imaginable diligence, to take heed to ourselves, and to all the flock over which

we are appointed overseers, that, by our *doctrine* and *example*, we may be instrumental in saving them and ourselves. Time will not allow me to enter upon a more particular consideration of these things.

IN the *third* and *last* place; a word of *direction* to you who are the hearers of the gospel, and I shall have done.

ALTHOUGH the words of the text seem to be addressed, primarily, to the apostles of our Lord, and to their successors in office, to the end of the world; yet are they applicable, in several respects, to all real Christians, without exception. They, also, are *the light of the world*, &c. *Be ye blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world*, Phil. ii. 15.

O WHAT a glorious influence had the gospel, as preached by the apostles, upon the hearts and lives of the primitive Christians! As soon as the benevolent design, and blessed tendency of it was proved to the world, mankind came cheerfully, in number like the morning dew, and gladly bending the neck to Messiah's yoke, proclaimed him, *God over all, blessed for evermore*; and, with joy, declared themselves the dutiful and loyal subjects of his kingdom. Thus it carried conviction wherever it went, gained proselytes, numerous as the rain upon the mown grafs, and showers that water the earth.

How

How gladly did they receive the word? And how steadfastly did they continue in the apostles doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers? How did they warm each others hearts, in all their religious meetings and assemblies, and re-kindled the holy fire of divine love and devotion, which, I am sorry to say, is almost expiring amongst us? And how great was their abstinence, mortification, and deadness, to the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world.

BUT, alas! *how is our gold become dim, and our most fine gold changed?* How little of that noble zeal for God and religion, for vital piety and Godliness, is to be found amongst us, for which the apostles of our Lord, and the primitive Christians, were so conspicuous? What nation under heaven hath been favoured with more peculiar and distinguishing blessings, civil and sacred, than we have been? And yet what nation hath made worse returns to God for them, than we have done? What would the primitive Christians, during the first ten persecutions, have given for the liberty of conscience, which we of this nation enjoy? At how dear a rate would our fore-fathers, at, and since our reformation from Popery, have purchased the blessed privileges of meeting, as we have access to do, without trouble or molestation, in God's house of prayer, here below, to serve and worship him according to the dictates of their own consciences, and to be fed

fed with the bread of life which came down from heaven? How highly, I say, would they have valued these privileges, and yet scarcely could they procure them, even with the peril of their lives?

MAY not this put thousands among us to the blush, who call themselves Christians, and are so in nothing beyond the name, who are placed in circumstances of knowing their duty, and under all the advantages of obedience, who enjoy the benefit of a standing revelation of the Divine mind and will, and a standing ministry too, who are ready to assist them in their highest and most important interests and concerns, and yet live in the habitual contempt of God and religion, profane the Name and Sabbaths of the Lord, despise his ordinances, and are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. We pray such, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God, to break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities, by turning to the Lord, from whom they have revolted, and gone astray.

To conclude; let it be our united prayer to God, that he would enable us all to walk as the children of the light, and of the day; to let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father. Let us all endeavour to do honour to our profession, by walking agreeably to it, and by abounding in all the

the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God; that, at our departure out of this world, we may be able, with the great apostle Paul, upon good grounds, to say, *We have fought a good fight, we have finished our course, we have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for us a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that day: and not to us, only, but unto all them, also, that love his appearing.* AMEN.

F I N I S.



